

The Wife Who Became a Crocodile Nita Keru 3 Aug. 1982 #68

10:13. Tape 39

There was once a couple who married and were staying. The wife said, "Every time we eat only taro. Why can't we go fishing?" So the husband said, "Today we will cut the dry coconut leaves." They cut and bundled them. In the evening they took their fire and mat down and made a fire on the canoe. The man took his spears down. He stood first and his came after; then they went off. They lit the dry coconut leaves and the man speared fish as they went.

In the middle of the night the woman became very cold. So she said to her husband, "I am feeling very cold." He replied, "All right. Go up and put the mat down and roll part of it over" (*soaso*). The woman went up and laid down. As she did this she turned herself into a crocodile. Her teeth were shining like shells. While the canoe was moving, the man looked back to see his wife. He made the fire brighter. He saw that his wife had changed herself into a crocodile. Then she turned and struck her husband down upon the sand. The crocodile bit him on his neck and he died.

She went back to the canoe and paddled home. She took the fish back to the house and baked them. In the morning, the dead man's elder brother told his children to go and see if his brother had come or not. So they asked the dead man's wife. She said, "He went out during the night for fish and did not come back." Then the elder brother came down to see his in-law. He saw that she was baking fish. So he asked, "Where is my younger brother?" She could not say anything. She just put her head down. Then she said, "My grandfather taught me some magic and I wanted to try it on my husband. So that is what I did." Then the man got up and hit the woman on the neck, killing her.

While he was killing her, he sent some people to look for his brother. They crossed the big river and saw him lying on the sand. They carried him home. As the man mourned for his brother, the wife was taken to her relatives who mourned for her. They were buried at the same time.

Note: Keru at one point said "*traí mo*" — try more!

